

PRESS RELEASE

Congressman John Conyers, Jr.

Fourteenth District, Michigan
Ranking Member, Committee on the Judiciary
Dean, Congressional Black Caucus

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:
June 17, 2003

CONTACT:
Dena Graziano (202)226-6888

CONYERS PRAISES DOJ GUIDELINES ON RACIAL PROFILING AS AN INITIAL FIRST STEP; SEEK STATUTORY RELIEF

Rep. John Conyers, Ranking Member issued the following statement in connection with today's release by the Justice Department Guidance concerning racial profiling:

"I welcome your attention to this critical civil rights issue. However, I must not mistake the issuance of federal guidelines as the final resolution of the racial profiling problem nationwide. The vast majority of racial profiling complaints arise from the activities of state and local law enforcement agencies. Moreover, while these guidelines send a signal, they are not a replacement for the enactment of comprehensive federal anti-profiling legislation. I again urge you to join us in the consultative process to pass the End Racial Profiling Act. This legislation would mandate data collection by state and local law enforcement agencies that receive federal funds and provide financial and technical support from the Department to ensure that the best practices are deployed to fight racial profiling.

I would also note that there is some ambiguity in the area of the use of race/ethnicity in the national security context in your guidelines. While I agree that there is no more important role for government than protecting the security of our borders, safety should not come at the sacrifice of civil liberties. In particular, creating a broad exception that allows even non-law enforcement airport screeners to use race or ethnicity as a factor for increased suspicion where there is 'no expectation that information [of a threat] be specific to a particular locale or even to a particular identified scheme' could allow members of the Arab and Muslim communities to continue as target for increased scrutiny.

I look forward to working with you in the future on this very important issue."

##JUD-108-06/17/03##